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In the claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (currently amended) A method of identifying a ligand of a bacterial sigma^{70} subunit which comprises contacting the sigma^{70} subunit, or a portion thereof comprising the anti-sigma^{70} binding region, with a test compound and a GST-AsiA fusion protein ~~of an anti-sigma^{70} factor of bacteriophage T$_4$, and~~ produced in a yeast expression system; determining whether the test compound binds competitively with the ~~anti-sigma^{70} factor~~ AsiA-protein component of the fusion protein to the sigma^{70} subunit or portion thereof; and identifying any such competitively binding test compound as a ligand of the bacterial sigma^{70} subunit.

2. (currently amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 1, which comprises:

(i) immobilizing the sigma^{70} subunit or portion thereof on a matrix or solid support;

(ii) adding the test compound and the fusion protein;

(iii) adding a first antibody against the fusion protein;

(iv) adding a labeled second antibody against the first antibody; and

(v) determining the amount of second antibody bound to the (first antibody-fusion protein-sigma^{70} subunit or portion thereof) complex formed on the matrix or solid support.

3. (currently amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the sigma^{70} subunit or portion thereof is obtained from *Escherichia coli or Salmonella typhimurium*.

4. (currently amended) [[A]] The method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the ~~anti-sigma^{70} factor~~ AsiA-protein component of the fusion protein has an amino acid sequence as shown in SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2.

5. (canceled)

6. (currently amended) [[A]] The method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the ligand is an inhibitor of a bacterial sigma^{70} subunit.

7. (new) The method according to claim 1, wherein the fusion protein is produced in a *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* or *Pichia pastoris* expression system.